

Enhancing Student Employability in Challenging Times

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The Problem

The year 2020 is likely to go down in history as the year that tested us in every aspect of our lives. University education, service provision and student support are some areas that needed rapid redesign so that we can continue to fulfil our commitments to students. Although a very small number of businesses moved quickly to provide remote working opportunities for students on placements and internships, a vast majority of students saw their work experience opportunities and plans wiped out overnight. Added to this was the fact that, for months and possibly years to come, employment will be a challenge to graduates who complete their studies in a post-Covid-19 era.

The Project

Whilst we continued to encourage our students to search and apply for work experience opportunities, it was becoming clear that we need to find a way to provide our students a way to enhance their CVs. This will of course not compensate for missing out on valuable work experience but will provide a mechanism to add value to their degree programme outcome.

To address this for students from our MA Marketing suite of programmes at the University of Greenwich, we launched the ViewPoints project on the LinkedIn platform. The aim of this project was to provide a forum for our students to showcase their skills and knowledge to potential employers as well as increase their visibility in the jobs market.

The Practical

We decided to use LinkedIn as the primary platform for this project so that we are able to tag students who make contributions which helps increase their visibility to employers. Our MA Marketing suite students were given the opportunity to project manage ViewPoints as well as become content creators. A team of six students decided to work together as Project Managers and based on their research and review, we also decided to launch a secondary platform for ViewPoints on Instagram.

All students were invited to contribute through written or other multi-media content. Each contribution is reviewed by an academic in the first instance before approval. Once approved, the Project Management team work with the contributors to design the layout and get the content ready for posting. When we initially invited students to contribute, we suggested that they look at sectors or areas of marketing they found interesting and relate this to the Covid-19 context. Recent events have also meant that we have students who expressed an interest in sharing their thoughts and views on Black Lives Matter. This led to us appointing a group of students and BLM leads who will be key in developing and reviewing content related to BLM.

The Path Ahead

One of the most rewarding aspects of the ViewPoints project is how it has become very student led. The ideas and initiatives from students has meant that, as well current students, we are also attracting contributions from businesses, academic staff working collaboratively with students and also from alumni of the MA Marketing suite of programmes. This engagement with the wider community will advance the purpose of this project to a greater extent than we had initially

expected. Even though it is too early in the process to identify impact, we have anecdotal evidence to suggest that students involved in the project are increasing their LinkedIn networks, engaging with employers with regards to opportunities and one of our Project Management team also managed to secure a work placement as a Project Manager for a creative agency.

In a time of great challenges and restrictions, our resilience has come through in many forms. Our ViewPoints project is one such initiative and provided students hope and motivation to keep working on their employability journeys. We also found that ViewPoints also helped students have a voice on issues that matter to them and make a statement to potential employers about their values as well as skills and knowledge.

We plan to continue to grow ViewPoint in the coming year and provide opportunities for students to convert their assessments into sharable content that can add value to their employment profiles.

<https://linkedin.com/company/viewpoints-ma-marketing-suite-uog> r

